776 brought to the middle of the river and thrown in while the villagers
782 prayed the spirit to give the village his protection and to bring rain to future harvests.

Faro's Taboos

776 All of Faro's subjects, in particular the Bambara of both sexes and
784 of all ages, are requested to respect a certain number of taboos.

The black earth, bogo fi, of the river banks, used ritually in many instances, would be excellent in pottery making. The women potters, however, cannot use it because it blackens in the process of baking. No pottery that has been fired may be washed in those places haunted by the spirit (1).

1. At Ségou, numerous drownings are blamed on the increasing frequency with which this taboo is broken.

[762] Butter in many places is forbidden by Faro and may not be preserved in water. (2)

2. This taboo is linked to the relation between Faro and the Peul, but the nature of their relationship has not been clarified.

No one crosses the river without opening his luggage and presenting Faro with the gold, copper, or food it contains. As a rule, the wearing of metals is forbidden in those places haunted by the spirit.

776 The principal taboo concerns menstrual blood which was originally
784 caused to flow because of the sins and impurity of Mousso /52/
841 Koroni. No menstruating woman may visit the places inhabited by Faro; none may draw water, wash clothes or cooking utensils, or cleanse herself in any of these spots. In addition, a man whose wife is in such condition must refrain from appearing at religious ceremonies or, if he is a priest, from performing the ritual.

In this part of Africa, as in many others, menses are conceived of as a necessary flow of empty blood, impure because it has not contributed to the formation of the foetus, the embryo of which each

776 woman carries within her. (1) Deprived of Faro's essentially im-
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1. See G. Dieterlen, "Mécanisme de l'impureté chez les Dogon" /The Mechanism of Impurity Among the Dogon/ Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 17 (1947), pp. 82 ff.

pregnating power and contrary to its generating action, this blood is considered evil, and all that recalls it or comes near it is excluded from the ritual.

Faro's Character, Role, and Deed

776 The principal characteristics of Faro's deed in creation are: omnipotence, omnipresence, and benevolence. Everything, whether animate or inanimate, depends on him in time and space.

The Bambara are extremely sensitive to Faro's power over the universe. They say: "Neither by day nor by night does Faro stop his incessant work." He sees to the efficient workings of the order which he inaugurated and which requires constant attention. His time is divided: from dawn until evening he occupies himself with the earth and its inhabitants; the next twelve hours' work is devoted to aquatic animals and members of his own family. Procreation depends on his will; it is he who, in the sky and in the water, controls the physical and spiritual life of all beings: the soul and vital force. In due order, with which the humans cooperate by observing his laws, he maintains life and makes the new bodies participate in the functioning of the universe according to a regular rhythm. Souls are reincarnated, assuring the continuity of spiritual forces in the world. The same power directs all acts of individual and social life: birth, circumcision, excision, initiation, marriage, agricultural work, voyages, war or peace.

Throughout the development of individual life, it is Faro who maintains man's physical integrity: he gives him health, necessary to
753 action. Sickness is always /53/ considered a loss of strength which the individual must ask Faro to restore. The sovereign master of man's life, he has the power to take it away from him.

778 wanzo and directing it into the mask to prevent it from doing harm
304 (1). Thus, nothing of the individual forces is lost. The wanzo itself,

1. See p. 256.

harmful at the beginning, when properly channeled and directed, serves to consolidate the collective energies of the infantile societies based on it.

Only when an adolescent has lost his wanzo is he permitted to marry;
[582] any individual would refuse to marry a partner who is not completely rid of it.

The Body

806 The Bambara have a notion of their bodies and the role of the different parts and organs. This notion is all the deeper because it is linked to that of the spiritual principles that animate it.

Indeed, the tere is determined by certain visible aspects of the body, while the ni and the dya also have sexes like the body. Therefore any study should include the links that unite the spiritual elements to the physical body in order to understand properly its state and function.

Blood, which together with breath is the seat of life, is also the vehicle of physical and spiritual forces that circulate with it in the veins and arteries. The blood sacrifice liberates these forces which sustain the altars, the soil, and the beings who receive them. Certain alliances are consecrated by an exchange of blood. The clear color of blood is proof of its purity: all infractions bring about a
● [841] change and cause it to become pale. Menstrual blood, testimony to Mousso Koroni's impurity and of the momentary sterility of women, is the principal taboo of the supernatural powers that create and protect life.

826 The head, which contains thought, is an essential part of the in-
828 dividual and his symbol: "the head of the members of society" is
827 represented by a stroke in the course of the rituals performed by members of the Komo or the Kworé. Man grows through his head just as a plant "grows through its head bud" (2). Man's head is protected

2. The myth mentions the "head of the balanza" at the time that men broke the

794 The head of the mask is usually made of bone (a human or hyena
532 skull), or of wood painted white, black, and red. The mask, per se, is made in such a way as to frighten the future initiates. Just as the soul of a dead person, which requests offerings or threatens to drag his kin with it, is feared, so too is this fact which is in contact with the altar of souls (nimara boli) and which reflects the face of the ancestors. It also represents Faro: the mask is sometimes provided with a long beard symbolic of his hair, and lightly plastered with a layer of black earth taken from the river bank and impregnated with his power; it is sometimes smeared with the blood of a young girl who has died in the course of the ceremonies, in commemoration of the virgins annually offered to Faro in olden times.

Copper arrows (kun bye) are inserted into the skull and charms (kun kanana) are attached to them with the purpose of attacking the undesirables (noninitiates, women, or children) who approach the dance site.

"The eyes of the mask are large, so that the Komo may see and unveil everything; the nostrils are well opened for he must sniff everything, smell the good and bad of things. The mouth is twisted for the Komo does not talk; he only whistles and sings. The ears are vast so that he may hear everything, even that /150/ which each one says secretly in his heart. The chin of the mask is square, a sign of purity, decision, and clairvoyance." During the ceremonies, he silently opens his mouth. It is said that due to the presence of the altar of souls, nimara boli, "happiness penetrates him" (1). By singing, he redistributes this felicity to the audience and this is why he repeats the verses.

1. Here dun, literally, penetration of happiness.

794 As a rule, women, griot and noninitiates are taboo to the mask.
532 To each of the elements composing it also belongs a particular taboo.
784 Thus, the head of the mask must never touch menstrual blood. Any
841 infraction would bring about "a visible change to the face" and the altars contained in the sac carried by the dancer would be without strength. For this reason, no member must participate in the ceremonies if his wife is in a menstrual period.

776 time; it is the noblest work, and one to which every member of the Bambara race must be subject. Faro is represented by a spiral, munu; the vibrating movements of the spiral are the same that animate the daily movements of the sun. These movements are materialized in a basket-work headdress, yugu, which has eight whorls and which formerly was reserved for kings. Faro's face is white, because he took it from the spirit of the air, Teliko, who was an albino. His ears are protected by two fins; his hands are of different sex; his tail is palmate, and his breast is of copper. Albinos and copper are the spirit's preferred sacrifices. All atmospheric manifestations denote his presence; his principal seat is the Niger River, but he has the gift of ubiquity and haunts all waters. Faro is accompanied by helpers, the most representative of whom is the bolokuruni, one-armed blacksmith of a black race. His air messenger is the swallow, who carries the
[824] fertilizing word. Certain plants are in permanent rapport with him: the Yayalẽ, the Ngoyõ (tomato), which is compared to blood. Thus, small fields of tomatoes reserved for the cult of Faro are cultivated in each village. All metals are reserved for Faro. The Bozo, born of Faro's first twins, enjoy a privileged position because they were not subject to the defilement caused by Mousso Koroni and can enter into direct communication with the spirit. In addition, they are the masters of the water.

776 The cult of Faro includes a whole series of taboos, such as the
784 black earth of the river which may not be used by the potters and
841 butter which may not be kept in water. But the principal taboo is menstrual blood, originally provoked by the disorders of Mousso Koroni.

B. Conception of Man

774 The Bambara conceive man as a microcosm, a resumé of the
761 totality of beings and things. The principle of duality contained in the original creative thought is realized in man by his twin souls which compensate for the separation of the sexes. In man, Faro is represented by the ni (soul) and the dya (double). Pemba is represented by the téré (the character, force, and conscience) and the nyama (which is the téré when it leaves its corporeal support after
[826] death). Mousso Koroni is represented by the Wanzo (evil force with